

18 NOV 1972

Approved For Release 2004/10/28 : CIA-RDP88-01314R000300030003-7

Washington Bureau

THE ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

When O.K. Bovard, then managing editor of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, sent Charles G. Ross to Washington to become the newspaper's first correspondent in the nation's capital, his pristine instruction was "If you have to, wait two years before you start sending anything."

The idea was that Bovard did not want stories from Washington until his correspondent knew what he was writing about, even if it took two years.

It is not of record that Ross waited two years before sending any copy, and he probably didn't, but it is of record that he became one of the most knowledgeable members of the Washington press corps and that 'know your stuff before you write' is still a watchword of the Post-Dispatch's Washington Bureau.

Ross opened the bureau in 1918 and remained its chief until 1934 when he returned to St. Louis as editor of the editorial page. Later he returned to Washington as contributing editor and afterward became press secretary to President Truman.

Began in a back room

It was a one-man bureau when Ross established it and it occupied the back room of a suite in the old Wyatt Building, the primary tenant of which was the Washington Bureau of the old *New York World*, its sister Pulitzer paper. Today it is a seven-member bureau, housed in a spacious suite in an ultra-modern office building a block from the White House. Each member of the staff has more space to work in and a much more elegant environment than was provided for Ross in the early post-World War One days.

In its present quarters at 1701 Pennsylvania Avenue, the bureau has been surrounded in the current year by offices of the Committee to Re-elect The President. Hearst Newspapers occupy offices on the same floor as the Post-Dispatch.

When Ross returned to St. Louis, his successor as bureau chief was Raymond P. Brandt, who had been a member of the bureau staff since 1923. Brandt headed the bureau until 1962 when Marquis W. Childs succeeded him. The current bureau chief is Richard Dudman, a member of the Post-Dispatch staff since 1949 and of the Washington bureau since 1954. He took over from Childs in January 1969.

Although retired from active bureau management, Childs is really an eighth member, since he writes news from Washington as contributing editor of the newspaper, in addition to his three-day-a-week column distributed by United Features Syndicate.

Five Pulitzer Prizes

Five Pulitzer prizes have been won on the basis of work done at the Post-Dispatch's Washington Bureau. John T. Rogers of the St. Louis staff won the prize for reporting in Washington in 1927

for exposing a corrupt federal judge while on a temporary assignment in the national capital. Two years later Paul Y. Anderson of the Washington Bureau won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting on the Teapot Dome scandal.

In 1932 Ross won the prize for correspondence for a series of articles called "The country's plight and what to do about it," a report on the depression and a forecast of parts of the Roosevelt New Deal.

In 1946 Edward A. Harris won the prize for national reporting for articles that blocked the appointment of Edwin A. Pauley as Secretary of the Navy by exposing Pauley's operations in connection with off-shore oil deposits.

When a new Pulitzer category, a prize for criticism or commentary, was established in 1970, Childs won it for his columns that year.

Among other prizes won by members of the bureau, were Brandt's Raymond Clapper Memorial Award for reporting and Child's 1970 Sigma Delta Chi Award for distinguished service.

Several travel abroad

Members of the Washington bureau are often detached for foreign assignments. Brandt led the way in the field of foreign coverage when Bovard gave him a \$2500 bonus in 1930 with the understanding that he would spend it on a trip to the Soviet Union. Brandt had worked in Russia with Herbert Hoover in 1922 and 1923. His bonus led to a 40-day assignment in the USSR in 1930 and 1931 which produced a series of 38 articles.

Thomas W. Ottenad, the bureau's principal political reporter, also specializes in foreign coverage. He has had several assignments in Europe and has traveled for the paper in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

This year, Dudman covered President Nixon's trip to China and Childs and James Deakin, the newspaper's White House correspondent, covered the President's trip to the Soviet Union. Dudman later returned to China on a 25-day assignment and still later spent 15 days in Hanoi to produce 10 articles.

It is the bureau's policy to concentrate on news fields and, in general leave routine news to the wire services. This policy has tended in recent years to combine specialization with versatility. Members work mainly at their special fields but occasionally, as in the case of the Pentagon Papers expose or the disclosure of the tentative Vietnam peace agreement, almost the entire Washington staff goes to work on a single story. Each staff man is expected to be conversant with several fields so that if necessary he can cover whatever news is of greatest current interest.

Among the news fields the Post-Dispatch has always covered is the Supreme Court. Curt Matthews now has that assignment, having taken it over from James C. Millstone, who went to St. Louis to become assistant managing editor.

William K. Wyant Jr. specializes in military and foreign affairs, as well as ecology and conservation.

Lawrence Taylor and Robert Adams, the newest members of the bureau, are on general assignment, with emphasis on regional news affecting Missouri and Illinois.

The distaff side is represented by Helen-Marie Fruth, office manager, and her assistant, Carol Hoblitzell.

It is the practice of the Post-Dispatch to assign reporters to Washington after joining the paper in St. Louis. All present members of the bureau came to Washington after service in the home office.

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